

ELLYN SATTER'S *HOW TO FEED*

Birth to 3 Months: Feeding Your Newborn

Help your newborn be calm and stay awake

Your newborn comes out of a quiet, dark place into a world full of sights, sounds and commotion. To do well with eating, she needs help being calm and staying awake. To help her, feed her the way she wants you to.

Do what your baby wants with feeding

Don't worry about spoiling her. You can't spoil a tiny baby.

- Pay attention to her cues and feed her when she wants to eat, when she is wide-awake and calm and before she gets upset from crying.
- Sit still during feeding. Keep the feeding smooth and steady.
- Let her eat her way - much or little, fast or slowly, steady or start-and-stop.
- Stop feeding her when she shows you she is finished eating. She will relax, slow down and stop nursing.
- Talk or play awhile after feeding. Put her to bed when she's calm and drowsy and let her put herself to sleep.

Your baby knows how much to eat

Your baby will eat as much as she needs and grow in the way that is right for her if you maintain a division of responsibility in feeding. You are responsible for the *what* of feeding - breastmilk or formula. Your baby is responsible for everything else - *when, where, how much, how fast*.

2 to 6 Months: Feeding Your Infant

When your baby is 2 or 3 months old, he begins to learn about love. He watches, smiles, jabbars, and reaches out to get your attention and to keep you close. Go by information coming from your baby to guide feeding. That shows him you love him and teaches him to love you back. Don't worry about spoiling him. You can't spoil a tiny baby. Continue to feed on demand. Wait until he is near six months to start solids, then start based on what your baby can do, not on how old he is.

- Feed your baby when he wants to eat, when he is wide-awake and calm.
- Let him eat his way - much or little, fast or slowly, steady or start-and-stop.
- Bring him to the table with you when you eat. He loves being with you, and he begins learning what eating is all about.
- Wait to start solids until he can sit up, open his mouth when he sees something coming, and close his lips over the spoon.
- Talk or play awhile after feeding. Put him to bed when he's calm and drowsy and let him put himself to sleep.

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5 to 9 Months: Feeding Your Older Baby

Your older baby's learning to eat solid foods goes along with her interest in the world. She watches you eat, and she wants to eat, too. Go by what your baby can do, not by how old she is to guide starting and progressing solid foods. Then let her do it her way. One baby will accept solid foods from the start, quickly learn to close her lips over the spoon and swallow, accept thicker, lumpier food, and be ready by 7 to 10 months to finger-feed herself modified family food at family meals. Another cautiously accepts solids but needs to be introduced gradually to a variety of tastes and textures and get to family meals when she is in her second or even third year. Another takes to the spoon demands to feed herself—even though she can't! Still another isn't at all interested in the spoon, and waits to eat solid foods until she can finger-feed herself family food.

Have the right goals

This point is NOT to get food into your baby. She is getting plenty of nourishment from her breastmilk or formula. It is to introduce her to the notion of eating different food, in a different way. Stow your agenda, and don't get pushy or you will spoil the fun for both of you!

Look for the signs. Your baby is ready to be introduced to solid foods when she can:

- Sit up
- Do something with the spoon. It is all learning and it is all part of growing up with eating.

Open up for it, get the food into her mouth.

Grab it and bang it.

Drop it on the floor.

Touch the food and smear it around.

How to introduce solid foods (provided your child is willing):

- Have her sit in a high chair looking straight ahead.
- Hold the spoon a few inches in front of her mouth and wait to see what she does.
- Do it her way: let her eat or not eat, eat little or much, fast or slow.
- Stop the feeding when she is done opening, swallowing, smearing, dropping, banging.
- Give her plenty of chances to learn, have fun, and keep it casual.

Help your baby develop mouth skills

You will help your baby to develop her mouth skills by offering her thicker and lumpier food and then pieces of soft family food at family meals. She will eat more regularly and at longer intervals, so feeding times are partly on demand and partly on a schedule that you determine. Feeding her will go best if you get started now with family meals.



7 to 15 Months: Feeding Your Almost-toddler

The almost-toddler – the child just getting started with finger-feeding – cares deeply about feeding himself and is enthusiastic about eating almost everything you put before him. The problem is the suddenness of his transition from being spoon-fed. One day he happily lets you feed him. The very next day – or the very next meal – he refuses to eat from the spoon, grabs at it, and puts up a fuss when you try to feed him. Many parents become alarmed and force or play games to get their child to eat. Don't. His eating will be worse, not better, and you will introduce feeding struggles that can go on for years. Instead, let him feed himself. Get started with family meals, if you aren't having them already, and eat with him, don't just feed him.

To address sudden meal refusal

- Offer your child safe food to pick up, chew and swallow: soft or easily chewed table food. Be considerate without catering with meal-planning.
- Let him eat his way-fingers or spoon, much or little, fast or slowly, and in any order - even if he eats dessert first.
- Offer breastmilk or formula in a cup, not a bottle. He may have whole milk when he is eating family food at mealtime and is a year or more old.
- Give him about a tablespoon of each food. Let him eat or not. Let him have more if he wants.
- Give him lots of chances to try new food and learn to like it.

Get started with sit-down snacks

Offer your child sit-down snacks every two or three hours between meals so he can arrive at mealtime hungry (but not starved) and ready to eat the food there. Offer any nipple-fed breastmilk or formula as a structured, sit-down snack. Don't offer anything else between times except water. You are establishing the meals-plus-snacks routine of the division of responsibility for older children: Parents do the *what*, *when* and *where* of feeding, children do the *how much* and *whether* of eating.

11 to 36 Months: Feeding Your Toddler

After eating enthusiastically as an almost-toddler, your toddler's eating will suddenly become cautious, erratic, picky, and fickle. Many times, she will only eat a few tastes, swallows, finger-fulls, or bites. Other times, she will eat more than you can imagine. *Do not* try in *any way* to get her to eat. Instead, give her both clear leadership and a sense of control. Get started with family meals, if you aren't having them already. Give leadership by offering foods you choose, at sit-down meals and snacks, at regular and reliable times. At meals and snacks let her decide how much and even whether she eats from foods you have put on the table. Keep yourself comfortable by understanding her normal eating behavior. Let her get down from the table when she loses interest in eating and/or starts to misbehave. Teach her to play quietly while *you* finish eating. You are following a division of responsibility in feeding.

Don't teach eating for emotional reasons

Your toddler is at high risk for learning to use food for emotional reasons. Toddlers are active, unceasing in their demands and prone to get upset. It is tempting to give food to quell the riot.

Don't. Instead, stick to scheduled feedings and sort out whether your child is hungry or sad, full or tired. Give attention, discipline, hugs or naps.

Maintain the quality of your feeding relationship

- Get your focus *off* what your child eats and *on* to how your child feels and behaves at family meals.
- Have 3 meals a day at set times and eat with her - don't just feed her. Offer her sit-down snacks every 2 to 3 hours between times.
- Offer her the same safe food you offered when she was an almost-toddler.
- Even though she will be skeptical even of food she has eaten enthusiastically before, do not short-order cook or limit the menu to foods she readily accepts. Instead, be family friendly in your meal-planning.
- Let her eat her way - fingers or utensils, fast or slow, much or little, 1 or 2 foods, several helpings or none at all, and in any order - even if she eats dessert first. Don't make her finish one thing before she has another. Don't make her clean her plate.
- Say no when she begs for food or drinks between times, except for water.

3 to 8 Years: Feeding Your Preschooler/Early School Age Child

Your child stops being a preschooler when he stops struggling continually for control, becomes more cooperative, and shows signs of wanting to please you. Along with everything else, feeding becomes easier. The preschooler/early school age child wants to please you and wants to get better at all that he does - including eating. But in some ways, that makes feeding harder. You can get a child in this developmental stage to eat more, less, or different foods than he wants. You can keep after him about table manners, even though it is still natural for him to use his fingers along with his silverware. But if you do, it will make him feel bad about eating. He will lose his pleasure in learning to eat the foods you eat. He will lose his ability to eat as much as he is hungry for and stop when he is full. He will, that is, provided he is a compliant child. If he is not so compliant, he will fight back and feeding will become a battleground. Stow your agendas, make meals with food you enjoy, eat with him, and follow the division of responsibility in feeding. Then trust your preschooler to manage his own eating

- Have 3 meals a day at set times and sit-down snacks at more-or-less set times. Say no to between-times food and beverage grazing - except for water.
- Sit down and eat with him, don't just feed him. Be good company.
- Be family-friendly in your meal and snack planning, not by catering to your child, but by including some foods that everyone can eat and enjoy. Putting together meals that allow everyone to be successful.
- Let him serve himself and eat his way - fast or slow, much or little, 1 or 2 foods. Let him eat *in any order*, even if he eats dessert first.

Let him have more of any food (except dessert), even if he hasn't cleaned his plate. Excuse him when he is done.